

(b) (6), (b) (7)

From: Cogliano, Vincent
Sent: Wednesday, November 08, 2017 5:27 PM
To: Elkins, Arthur
Cc: Sinks, Tom; Alderton, Steven M.; Copper, Carolyn; (b) (6), (b) (7)
Subject: PRIVILEGED AND CONFIDENTIAL: Allegation of a Loss of Scientific Integrity
Attachments: Report of an allegation of a violation of scientific integrity NBEP Octo....docx

Dear Inspector Elkins,

Francesca Grifo, EPA's Scientific Integrity Official, is on extended leave and I am serving as her backup.

I am writing to inform you about the attached allegation of a loss of scientific integrity, which I received from a group of EPA employees.

I am sending this to find out whether your office has an interest in investigating any part of this allegation or, if you prefer, that my office pursue the evaluation of the allegation.

Also, please let me know whether this is a protected action under the Whistleblower Protection Acts, both for the employees making the allegation and for the employees evaluating the allegation.

Tom Sinks, Director of the Office of the Science Advisor, and I met with Steve Alderton, EPA Whistleblower Protection Ombudsperson, on November 8th about this allegation.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Vincent Cogliano, PhD

Office of the Science Advisor
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Ave NW (8105R)
Washington DC 20460

REPORT OF AN ALLEGATION OF A LOSS OF SCIENTIFIC INTEGRITY AT EPA

November 7, 2017

(b) (6), (b) (7)(C), (b) (7)(D)

Allegation

(b) (6), (b) (7)(C), (b) (7)(D) reporting an Allegation of a Loss of Scientific Integrity¹. Three Ph.D. scientists employed by or affiliated to EPA ((b) (6), (b) (7)(C)) were prevented from presenting scientific results at the Narragansett Bay Estuary Program State of the Bay workshop in Providence, RI on October 23, 2017.

Specifically, cancellation of their presentations at this event was in violation of the first principle of Scientific Integrity in Section IV:

Ensure that the Agency's Scientific work is of the highest quality, free from political interference or personal motivations.

The policy also includes the following statement in Section IV.B Release of Scientific Information to the Public:

Scientific research and analysis comprise the foundation of all major EPA policy decisions. Therefore, the Agency should maintain vigilance toward ensuring that scientific research and results are presented openly and with integrity, accuracy, timeliness, and the full public scrutiny demanded when developing sound, high-quality environmental science. And, ...[t]o that end, the EPA strongly encourages and supports transparency and active, open communications through various forms including, but not limited to, publication in peer-reviewed or refereed journals, conference papers and presentations, media interviews, responses to Congressional inquiries, web postings, and news releases.

Section IV.B 3 states the following:

Under no circumstances, should the public affairs staff attempt to alter or change scientific findings or results. The role of the public affairs officer is to ensure that the science is plainly and cleanly communicated for the intended audience in a timely fashion.

Based on published information and corroborated by EPA colleagues, the Office of Public Affairs initiated the cancellation.

¹ The policy is found here: <https://www.epa.gov/osa/basic-information-about-scientific-integrity>

On a webinar on Tuesday October 24, EPA Scientific Integrity Officials stated that communicating scientific results is a key goal of the Scientific Integrity Policy and efforts to restrict communication of science would be taken very seriously.

Description

According to several news outlets, including the New York Times, the Washington Post and The Guardian, (b) (6), (b) (7)(C) were prevented from presenting results of scientific studies they conducted at the Narragansett Bay Estuary Program State of the Bay workshop. The EPA is not denying this. The article in the NY Times, and elsewhere, cited (b) (6), (b) (7)(C) who made the decision. In articles in the Washington Post and in The Guardian on October 24 after the event, an unnamed EPA official stated that the scientist's presentations were cancelled because: "this is not an EPA conference". (b) (6), (b) (7)(C)

According to published reports and colleagues at EPA, the lab director at the Atlantic Ecology Division in Narragansett RI, where the scientists are employed (or contracted), contacted the scientists on October 20 and also informed the organizers of the NBEP State of the Bay workshop that they were barred from making their presentations.

This event was the culmination of a multiyear effort to characterize the state of Narragansett Bay and its watershed. The email invitation for the workshop is included as Attachment 1. In contrast to the statement by the Office of Public Affairs, the workshop was in fact an EPA-funded workshop. The Narragansett Bay Estuary Program, like all National Estuary Programs (NEPs), is funded by EPA with matching funds. The goal of the NEP is to engage the public and managers at all levels of government to develop and implement a management plan, based on a scientific characterization of the bay. On October 23, the NBEP was reporting on its State of the Bay, a process that all 28 NEPs have been doing for almost 30 years. The NBEP benefitted from its proximity to the AED laboratory in Narragansett, RI and many scientists from the lab contributed to the report, based on EPA funded work.

(b) (6), (b) (7)(C) contributed directly to the report. (b) (6), (b) (7)(C) is acknowledged in the report, but does not appear to be an author. (b) (6), (b) (7)(C) at the workshop, and based on her research experience in Narragansett Bay, was providing basic ecological context for the State of the Bay report (b) (6), (b) (7)(C) at the AED laboratory. (b) (6), (b) (7)(C) a consultant to EPA.

How the allegation relates to loss of integrity and the impact of the loss of integrity

Until recently, EPA was considered among the most credible sources for environmental science information. In its report on Citizen Science published in December 2016, the National Advisory Council for Environmental Policy and Technology, an advisory committee to EPA, asserted that, "EPA is seen as the final arbiter of environmental and health science".² Science is considered a core principle at EPA;

² NACEPT. 2016. Environmental Protection Belongs to the Public A Vision for Citizen Science at EPA. EPA 219-R-16-001

virtually every decision we make is rooted in sound science, whether it is establishing a drinking water advisory level, or determining the appropriate remedy at a hazardous waste site.³ Our Office of Research and Development is among the largest environmental research laboratories in the world, and their research assists program offices and the general public. Preventing scientists from communicating their research diminishes this credibility.

Barring scientists from speaking, or even attending scientific conferences violates one of the core principles of science – communication. Part of the ongoing peer review process is to communicate results whether in person, as a speaker at a workshop, or in an academic journal.

Barring these scientists has sent a chilling message to scientists at EPA that some of their work is not considered credible by the Agency leaders, and subject to political influence. This risks objectivity in the way science is conducted, as well as the type of science conducted.

It is also troubling that although affiliated with and funded by EPA and working in an EPA facility, two of the scientists barred from presenting were not actual EPA employees.

Finally, reporting the names of three scientists that were barred from presenting their work may result in misperceptions about their work in the future.

Statement regarding personal or professional extenuating circumstances

(b) (6), (b) (7)(C), (b) (7)(D)

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] We are submitting this allegation at our own behest; the three affected scientists were not involved in our decision.

Is this allegation being considered or submitted elsewhere?

It is possible that this allegation will be submitted by others, as the action was widely reported by local and national news outlets. In addition, on a recent webinar about the EPA Scientific Integrity Policy, participants on the call asked about the process for submitting an allegation related to this specific issue.

Conclusion

We are concerned that this action, combined with other similar actions from the administration, is continuing a troubling pattern of stifling science at EPA. The only way EPA's Science Integrity Policy can live up to its name, is to acknowledge that this is a mistake the Agency will not repeat.

³ The Science Integrity Policy in Section B states: "Scientific research and analysis comprise the foundation of all major EPA policy decisions."

Attachment 1. Email invitation:

Good afternoon friends of Narragansett Bay and its watershed,

On behalf of the Narragansett Bay Estuary Program, you are cordially invited to attend the **State of Narragansett Bay and Its Watershed Workshop**. The Narragansett Bay Estuary Program brought together more than 50 practitioners from universities, organizations, and agencies in a bi-state effort by Massachusetts and Rhode Island to collaborate on the 2017 *State of Narragansett Bay and Its Watershed* technical report (see report [here](#)). The October 23rd workshop will include the official launch of the 2017 *State of Narragansett Bay and Its Watershed Summary Report* and will feature an array of distinguished speakers and panelists (see agenda below)

When: Monday, October 23, 2017, 12:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Where: Save The Bay Center, 100 Save The Bay Drive, Providence, Rhode Island

RSVP: If you are interested in attending this workshop, please [RSVP](#) by sending an email to: info@nbep.org.



Agenda

Welcome (b) (6), (b) (7)(C) Chair of the Narragansett Bay Estuary Program's Steering Committee, Director of the Coastal Institute and Professor of Communication Studies and Theater, University of Rhode Island

Remarks: *State of Narragansett Bay and Its Watershed* - (b) (6), (b) (7)(C) Chair of the Narragansett Bay Estuary Program's Science Advisory Committee, Professor of Oceanography, Graduate School of Oceanography, University of Rhode Island

Keynote Address: *Narragansett Bay as a Sentinel Estuary* - (b) (6), (b) (7)(C) Research Ecologist, United States Environmental Protection Agency, National Health and Environmental Effects Research Laboratory, Atlantic Ecology Division

Panel Discussions

Moderator - (b) (6), (b) (7)(C) Director of Advocacy and Policy, Save The Bay

Panel 1 - Reduction of Nitrogen and Phosphorus Loadings and the Future Implications of Rising Temperatures and More Intense Precipitation

- (b) (6), (b) (7)(C), Associate Professor, Department of Earth and Environment and Department of Biology, Boston University
- (b) (6), (b) (7)(C), Director of the Watershed Planning Program, Division of Watershed Management, Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection
- (b) (6), (b) (7)(C), Chief, Surface Water Protection, Office of Water Resources, Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management
- (b) (6), (b) (7)(C) Henry L. Doherty Professor of Oceanography Emeritus, Department of Earth, Environmental, and Planetary Sciences, Brown University

Panel 2 - The Present and Future Biological Implications of Climate Change

- (b) (6), (b) (7)(C), Associate Professor of Cell and Molecular Biology, College of the Environment and Life Science, Graduate School of Oceanography, University of Rhode Island
- (b) (6), (b) (7)(C), ORISE Postdoctoral Fellow at United States Environmental Protection Agency, National Health and Environmental Effects Research Laboratory, Atlantic Ecology Division
- (b) (6), (b) (7)(C), Marine Fisheries Biologist, Division of Marine Fisheries, Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management
- (b) (6), (b) (7)(C), Professor of Oceanography, Director of the Marine Ecosystems Research Lab, Graduate School of Oceanography, University of Rhode Island
- (b) (6), (b) (7)(C), E & C Enviroscapes, consultant to the United States Environmental Protection Agency

The Narragansett Bay Estuary Program is one of 28 programs designated as estuaries of national significance under the [National Estuary Program](#). The program helps protect and restore the water quality and ecological integrity of Narragansett Bay and its watershed.

This project was funded by agreements (CE96172201, CE96184201, CE00A00004, and CE00A00127) awarded by the Environmental Protection Agency to the New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission in partnership with the Narragansett Bay Estuary Program. Although the information in this document has been funded wholly or in part by the United States Environmental Protection Agency under agreements CE96172201, CE96184201, CE00A00004, and CE00A00127 to NEIWPCC, it has not undergone the Agency's publications review process and therefore, may not necessarily reflect the views of the Agency and no official endorsement should be inferred. The viewpoints expressed here do not necessarily represent those of the Narragansett Bay Estuary Program, NEIWPCC, or EPA nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or causes constitute endorsement or recommendation for use.

(b) (6), (b) (7)(C)

NEIWPCC Assistant Environmental Analyst

Narragansett Bay Estuary Program

235 Promenade Street – Suite (b) (6), (b) (7)(C)

Providence, RI 02908

(b) (6), (b) (7)(C)

(b) (6), (b) (7)(C)

(b) (6), (b) (7)(C) [@nbep.org](mailto:(b) (6), (b) (7)(C)@nbep.org)

www.nbep.org

www.neiwpcc.org

NARRAGANSETT BAY ESTUARY PROGRAM

(b) (6), (b) (7)

From: Copper, Carolyn
Sent: Wednesday, November 22, 2017 9:51 AM
To: (b) (6), (b) (7)
Cc: El-Zoghbi, Christine; Alderton, Steven M.
Subject: FW: Due 12/8/2017 -Allegation of a Loss of Scientific Integrity - EVAL
Attachments: 2018-0068 eval.pdf

Good Morning (b) (6) – This have been reviewed. Upon receiving allegations of scientific integrity violations our past practice has been to forward them to the SIO for their review and action. This is the IG's desired practice and is consistent with a primary mission of the SIO. I didn't see anything in the letter stating that the SIO or its staff are compromised, conflicted, or otherwise have impediments to completing an appropriate review of the allegations in forwarded complaint.

Please refer this matter back to SIO for their review and action.

Thanks ~ Carolyn

From: (b) (6), (b) (7)
Sent: Thursday, November 16, 2017 4:28 PM
To: Copper, Carolyn <Copper.Carolyn@epa.gov>; El-Zoghbi, Christine <El-Zoghbi.Christine@epa.gov>
Subject: Due 12/8/2017 -Allegation of a Loss of Scientific Integrity - EVAL

(b) (6), (b) (7)(C)
(b) (6), (b) (7)(C)

US EPA, OIG, Office of Investigations HQ
1200 Pennsylvania Ave NW Mailcode 2431T
Washington, DC 20460
Voice - 202-566-(b) (6) Cell (b) (6), (b) (7)

Hotline - 202-566-2476 or 888-546-8740
Hotline Fax 202-566-2599 Web Address oig_hotline@epa.gov

Hotline records are protected under the Privacy Act 5 U.S.C. § 552a. All EPA employees handling protected information have a legal and ethical obligation to hold that information in confidence and to actively protect it from improper uses. Except as specifically authorized, EPA employees shall not disclose, directly or indirectly the contents of any record about another individual to any person or organization. EPA employees who willfully release protected information, without authority, may be guilty of a misdemeanor and fined up to \$5,000. In addition, any employee violating the Privacy Act or EPA regulations is subject to disciplinary action, which may result in dismissal.



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

OFFICE OF
INSPECTOR GENERAL

December 20, 2017

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Office of Inspector General Hotline Complaint 2018-0068

FROM: (b) (6), (b) (7)(C) [REDACTED]
(b) (6), (b) (7)(C) [REDACTED]
Headquarters, Office of Inspector General

TO: Vincent Cogliano
Acting Scientific Integrity Official

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Office of Inspector General (OIG), Hotline received your forwarded electronic message on November 8, 2017. This message was reviewed by the EPA OIG Office of Program Evaluation. This office reported back to the Hotline that no investigation, audit or evaluation would be opened by the EPA OIG. This Hotline is closed with no further action.

Please do not hesitate calling me at (202) 566-(b) (6) if there are any questions.

Attachment:

(b) (6), (b) (7)
(C)

From: (b) (6), (b) (7)(C)
Sent: Thursday, November 16, 2017 4:27 PM
To: Cogliano, Vincent
Cc: Alderton, Steven M.
Subject: RE: PRIVILEGED AND CONFIDENTIAL: Allegation of a Loss of Scientific Integrity

This was assigned Hotline #2018-0068 today and forwarded to the EPA OIG Office of Program Evaluation for comments. (b) (6)

(b) (6), (b) (7)(C)
(b) (6), (b) (7)(C)

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From: Cogliano, Vincent
Sent: Wednesday, November 08, 2017 5:27 PM
To: Elkins, Arthur <Elkins.Arthur@epa.gov>
Cc: Sinks, Tom <Sinks.Tom@epa.gov>; Alderton, Steven M. <Alderton.Steve@epa.gov>; Copper, Carolyn <Copper.Carolyn@epa.gov>; (b) (6), (b) (7)(C) <(b) (6), (b) (7)(C)@epa.gov>
Subject: PRIVILEGED AND CONFIDENTIAL: Allegation of a Loss of Scientific Integrity

Dear Inspector Elkins,

Francesca Grifo, EPA's Scientific Integrity Official, is on extended leave and I am serving as her backup.

I am writing to inform you about the attached allegation of a loss of scientific integrity, which I received from a group of EPA employees.

I am sending this to find out whether your office has an interest in investigating any part of this allegation or, if you prefer, that my office pursue the evaluation of the allegation.

Also, please let me know whether this is a protected action under the Whistleblower Protection Acts, both for the employees making the allegation and for the employees evaluating the allegation.

Tom Sinks, Director of the Office of the Science Advisor, and I met with Steve Alderton, EPA Whistleblower Protection Ombudsperson, on November 8th about this allegation.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Vincent Cogliano, PhD

Office of the Science Advisor
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

1200 Pennsylvania Ave NW (8105R)
Washington DC 20460

(b) (6), (b) (7)
(C)

From: (b) (6), (b) (7)(C)
Sent: Tuesday, November 21, 2017 10:25 AM
To: Dutton, Allison
Cc: Copper, Carolyn; El-Zoghbi, Christine
Subject: RE: Allegation Letter sent to SIO regarding Narragansett Bay Watershed
Attachments: 2018-0068 eval.pdf

This was forwarded to OPE last week for an evaluation for comments due back on December 8. I have cc Carolyn and Christine. Please advise. (b) (6)

(b) (6), (b) (7)(C)
(b) (6), (b) (7)(C)

US EPA, OIG, Office of Investigations HQ
1200 Pennsylvania Ave NW Mailcode 2431T
Washington, DC 20460
Voice - 202-566-(b) (6) Cell (b) (6), (b) (7)(C)

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From: Dutton, Allison
Sent: Tuesday, November 21, 2017 9:06 AM
To: (b) (6), (b) (7)(C) <(b) (6), (b) (7)(C)@epa.gov>
Cc: LIGHT, FREDRICK <Light.Fredrick@epa.gov>; Stolz, Luke <Stolz.Luke@epa.gov>; Gilbride, Patrick <Gilbride.Patrick@epa.gov>
Subject: Allegation Letter sent to SIO regarding Narragansett Bay Watershed

Hello (b) (6),

Our team has an assignment underway looking at ORD's Safe and Sustainable Water Research program and we have reached out to a number of (b) (6), (b) (7)(C), (b) (7)(D)

(b) (6), (b) (7)(C), (b) (7)(D) see highlighted below).

We plan to speak with (b) (6) next week but wanted to circled back with you to see if OIG is aware of this allegation and if so, can you provide us with a copy of the letter?

Let me know if you have any questions.

Thanks!
Alli

Allison J. Dutton
Project Manager | U.S. EPA - Office of Inspector General
1650 Arch Street | Mail Code 3Ai00 | Philadelphia, PA 19103-2029
Desk: (215) 814-2349 | Cell: (b) (6), (b) (7)(C) | Fax: (215) 814-2351
dutton.allison@epa.gov

From: Stolz, Luke

Sent: Monday, November 20, 2017 1:53 PM

To: (b) (6), (b) (7)(C)

Cc: Dutton, Allison <Dutton.Allison@epa.gov>; Gilbride, Patrick <Gilbride.Patrick@epa.gov>; LIGHT, FREDRICK <Light.Fredrick@epa.gov>

Subject: RE: Meeting with OIG on Information Request Related to ORD SSWR Product

Hi (b) (6),

Thank you for the reply. We still would like to keep our scheduled meeting for November 29th. (b) (6), (b) (7)(C), (b) (7)(D)

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]. We would also like hear about any additional people you think we should talk to about these topics.

We appreciate your help and hope you have a wonderful holiday.

Thank you,
Luke

From: (b) (6), (b) (7)(C)

Sent: Friday, November 17, 2017 10:57 AM

To: Stolz, Luke <Stolz.Luke@epa.gov>

Subject: RE: Meeting with OIG on Information Request Related to ORD SSWR Product

Luke:

(b) (6), (b) (7)(C) I know you are working under a tight deadline.

Full disclosure – (b) (6), (b) (7)(C)

(b) (6), (b) (7)(C), (b) (7)(D)

(b) (6), (b) (7)(C), (b) (7)(D)

[REDACTED] see a number of related research papers on their website:

<http://nbep.org/resource-library/>

I'm not sure that I can be of much more help to your investigation – I am not familiar with the details or status of the specific research you reference. I may be able to suggest people you might consult with. If it is more efficient to email me questions and have me respond via email I am happy to help out in any way I can.

Sincerely,

(b) (6), (b) (7)(C)

-----Original Appointment-----

From: Stolz, Luke

Sent: Thursday, November 16, 2017 2:53 PM

To: (b) (6), (b) (7)(C); Dutton, Allison; LIGHT, FREDRICK; Gilbride, Patrick

Subject: Meeting with OIG on Information Request Related to ORD SSWR Product

When: Wednesday, November 29, 2017 10:00 AM-11:00 AM (UTC-07:00) Mountain Time (US & Canada).

Where: Call in # 866-299-3188 code: 215-562-9863

Hi (b) (6),

This is the meeting invitation I mentioned in my earlier email. As I said in that email, we would like to speak with you

(b) (6), (b) (7)(C), (b) (5)

well

as hear any other thoughts you would like to share with us. We are aware of the recent State of Narragansett Bay and Its Watershed Workshop and would like to discuss this further with you during this meeting.

If you have any questions or concerns or if this time does not work for you please let me know. Also, if you would prefer to meet via Video Conference please let me know and we can try to arrange that. We look forward to speaking with you.

Thank you,
Luke

Luke Stolz
Auditor
EPA Office of Inspector General
303-312-6165

Product Title: 6.1.A.1 Trend analysis of stressors and ecological responses, particularly nutrients, in the Narragansett Bay Watershed

Product Description from ORD's Research Management System: "This task will take a retrospective approach to understanding the historic stressors to the Narragansett Bay watershed, the ecological responses and the consequential governance decisions. In addition to the Project identified in the Associated Project pull down field (SSWR 1.1), Project 6.1 will be in communication with internal ORD collaborators in SSWR 2.3 Optimized solutions for sustainable nutrient management, and SHC 3.3 Integrated Management of Reactive Nitrogen.

Research will be conducted to better understand and manage the trajectory of ecosystem change in the Narragansett Bay watershed using an integrated nutrient management approach that will be transferable to other locations and scenarios. The SSWR Signature Project has developed a conceptual model of the Narragansett Bay Watershed that includes multiple scales of governance, a social context and a biophysical context that are related through a series of drivers (e.g. population growth and global climate change) effecting change in the state of a natural resource, e.g. sustainable water. The relationships between compartments in the conceptual model represent hypotheses which directly inform our research planning. Current system conditions in Narragansett Bay's watershed and fresh, coastal, and marine aquatic ecosystems will be evaluated through the development of a mass balance model of nutrients (N and P) for the Bay. The modeling effort will provide information on varying sources and apportionment for N and P. The current and historic impact of nitrogen on water quality will be evaluated and the relationship between nutrients and ecosystem structure and function will be developed for Narragansett Bay using publically available, long-term datasets (e.g., Rhode Island trawl survey data, RI DEM seine net survey, available data on temperature, precipitation, dissolved oxygen, pH,

nutrient loading, and primary productivity). Additionally, analyses will be conducted to assess ecosystem service endpoints and the results used to inform models (output 2) relating nutrients (stressors) to ecosystem responses (ecological outcomes). These data sets and analyses will also inform us about: 1) spatial variations in trophic conditions among lakes and reservoirs, 2) information about the distribution and magnitude of hypoxic events and fish kills, invasive species and changes in biodiversity within the Bay, and 3) data gaps. Lastly, this information will inform discussions on determining the targets for the desired future conditions of the Narragansett Bay system as part of Task 3 in the Narragansett Bay Signature Project. Lastly, in order to effectively conduct the proposed research, stakeholders will be engaged and internal and external EPA collaborators invited to participate in this transdisciplinary research program.”